

Vegetation MOU Working Group  
Oct 1, 2002

**Summary of Oct 1, 2002  
meeting**

Next meeting Dec 12, 2002 9-noon Fed Bldg – 2800 Cottage Way Rm. E-2904

**I. Minor Discussion Topics**

- a. **FGDC recognition of National Vegetation Classification System** – Several group members were interested in confirming that FGDC recognized the NVCS approach that we are pursuing. Hazel Gordon and Ralph Warbington (USFS) provided written materials from FGDC confirming this, so we do not need to take any action on this issue.
- b. **Ecological Society of America Vegetation Standards** – for any group members interested, ESA has a website providing these standards - [www.vegbank.org](http://www.vegbank.org)
- c. **USFS Vegetation Standards** – USFS is looking for comments on their vegetation standards. These standards are available online at [www.fs.fed.us/emc/rig](http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/rig).
- d. **Manual of California Vegetation** – The second edition of the MCV will strive to achieve NVCS standards. In cases where this is not possible, it will at least try to link to NVCS standards

**II. California Interagency Wildlife Task Group feedback** – Monica Parisi

Monica wanted to get CIWTG input on the importance of shrub structural diversity as a core attribute in our work. CIWTG recommended keeping it as an optional element, but not a core element, so we dropped it from list of core map unit attributes.

CIWTG was also interested in other map unit design attributes and provided additional recommendations. They recommended that live/dead fuel ratios become optional, instead of core attributes. The Vegetation Group decided to lump information about these fuel ratios with shrub structural diversity, rather than have a unique field for it. WHR types should be core attribute at medium and fine scale, but they do not apply at broad scale. They recommended dropping statistically derived special habitat elements and diagnostic species from attribute table. They requested that multiple dominant species (usually 1-3) be listed where appropriate, and that these be described to the species level for trees in the medium scale product.

Marc Hoshovsky will make changes to the standards and ask Mark Rosenberg to put standards on Group's web site.

**III. Land use and Land Cover**

We agreed that 2 separate classifications were needed and that vegetation databases should provide separate fields for these two different types of information. Map units should be classified to land cover types first, based on vegetation classification. These units can then be subdivided by land use types, if needed. For example, mappers would delineate a unique patch of oaks first and then subdivide that into a low-density rural and moderate density rural secondarily.

The map unit design attribute table needs to have two attributes added: Land-use classified to Anderson Level 1 will be core at all scales and Level 2 will be optional at all scales.

Jeff Milliken is interested in reviving a Land Use group to initially focus on classification and related mapping issues. This group would strive for developing rules for delineating land use on map products. This group will also need to develop a key for applying Anderson and housing densities to map units, as well as define these land use categories.

There is still interest in developing guidance for handling non-natural vegetation (such as croplands and orchards) in terms of their value for wildlife. Monica needs to look at Anderson Level 2 for agriculture and identify the minimum core requirements for extra data needed for WHR (assuming Anderson and physiognomic life form now are already part of attribute table).

Jeff Milliken also mentioned the existence of ECognition ([www.definiens.com](http://www.definiens.com)), a software program for classifying landuse and land cover from remote sensing [www.definiens.com](http://www.definiens.com)

#### **IV. Mapping Rules Crosswalk update**

Todd and Karen updated group on progress. They have completed 60% of the work and they will be completed in November. They are creating terse statements with quantitative rules.

The group recommended the following improvements on the comparison table:

- a. Include physiognomic class and subclass in each descriptions, as well as the upper hierarchy level types
- b. Identify zones where quantitative data is available to define classification.
- c. Identify secondary mapping levels for hardwoods and conifers.
- d. Ensure consistent use of relative and absolute cover

The next steps for this classification comparison exercise are:

- a. For minor differences between classifications, determine whether minor changes can be made to existing classifications without difficulty?
- b. Identify significant differences between classifications for individual vegetation types. For each of these vegetation types, convene a group of habitat specialists to recommend revisions to existing classifications. The MOU group can then discuss potential costs for making these revisions and make necessary changes to classifications over time, as feasible.

#### **V. Disturbance Category Rules**

Todd Keeler-Wolf provided more details on how to describe disturbance categories. Participants recommended including change detection categories used by USFS/CDF. A small group of Mark R, Brian, Cyndi Royce and Todd will convene to refine this proposal and provide quantitative rules.

#### **VI. Map Unit Aggregation Types**

The group changed the name of the previously named “map unit internal diversity” attribute to “map unit aggregation types”. Brian shared the standard aggregation types used by USFS. The types are:

Homogenous type - a map unit with at least 85% of the area composed of a homogenous condition of vegetation (at the appropriate level in the classification hierarchy), uniform or dominance type.

Compositional group type - a map unit composed of a grouping of vegetation or dominance types (at the appropriate level in the classification hierarchy) with similar taxonomic composition and physiognomy.

Vegetation Complex type - a map unit composed of a grouping of dissimilar vegetation types (at the appropriate level in the classification hierarchy) that are spatially and ecologically related on the landscape.

These are very similar to Todd's previous recommendations. The group adopted them. This attribute needs to be considered core at all levels.

## **VII. Next steps**

The standards are ready for review. These standards need to be presented as a long-term implementation goal, not a request for commitments to making changes immediately. More technical work is needed to develop data dictionary and database design, but this doesn't need to be done before formal review.

1. Draft white paper describing standards, how we got to them, how to use them, future direction of group. This will need to be reviewed by the group first. We also need to get an informal assessment of the cost or effort required to implement each standards within each agency program.

2. Get technical review of the standards and white paper. This review will basically ask reviewers whether or not this approach will work for them to follow for future mapping? Is it likely to work for others? Involve Larry Fox, W. Riverside, SANDAG, SCAG, ABAG, Chuck Nelson, SDSU Janet Franklin, Patrick Crist or GAP, Scott Phillips at Fresno.

3. Finally, get formal review from directors, seeking support that this is a good direction? We will be developing a strategic plan for long-term implementation which will provide more information at a later time.

## **VIII. Follow-up assignments**

1. Marc will make changes to the map attributes table and ask Mark R to put standards on Veg web site.

2. A small group of Mark R, Brian, Cyndi Roye and Todd will convene to refine this proposal and provide quantitative rules

- 3, Jeff Milliken is interested in reviving a Land Use group to initially focus on classification and related mapping issues.

- 4, Monica needs to look at Anderson Level 2 for agriculture and identify the minimum core requirements for extra data needed for WHR (assuming Anderson and physiognomic lifeform already part of attribute table).

5. Karen and Todd make changes in classification rules comparison table

6. Marc writes up white paper describing standards and how we got here. He will coordinate Veg MOU group review, technical review and director review

## **IX. Agenda for next meeting**

1. MCV update, draft review
2. results of small group proposal on quantitative rules for disturbance
3. WHR agricultural classification needs.
4. Update on Map Unit Aggregation rules - do we need to do this? Seems completed
5. Preliminary impact analysis of standards
6. Review of Marc's white paper
7. Discuss regional mapping effort, interest in funding.